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SUBJECT: PLANS FOR IRAQ PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Representatives of British, Canadian, United Nations, and US missions met on August 27 to discuss efforts to raise the profile of public sector reform. Participants shared the perception that the Government of Iraq (GOI) has yet to take any initiative to ensure the emerging public sector becomes professional and free from cronyism and corruption. The central government is pre-occupied with other pressing concerns and there is no apparent Ministry to call for or lead reform efforts. End summary.

¶2. (U) The Department for International Development (DFID) representative at the British Embassy organized a meeting on August 27 to discuss the status of civil service reform in Iraq. Present were DFID Iraq governance expert Dr. Richard Thomas, DFID Iraq Public Administration Reform Project Team Leader Tony Laurence, and DFID Development Officer Dr. Lorna Hall. UN Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) Deputy Reconstruction and Humanitarian Coordinator Yacoub El Hillo and UNAMI Advisor Kishore Mandhyan were present along with Canadian Embassy Development Counselor Heather Cruden. Post was represented by IRMO Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations Martha Hudson and Poloff.

¶3. (SBU) The participants described public sector reform efforts currently being conducted in Iraq as fragmented, irregular and disorganized. All recognized the need to establish firm principles and practices of merit staffing, ethical behavior, and professionalism in Iraq's emerging new civil service before bad habits (such as cronyism, corruption, etc.) develop and become entrenched. Many Iraqis have residual positive memories of the UK public sector and had their own Civil Service Board until it was disbanded by Saddam in the late 1960's, and may be receptive to reform efforts which will contribute to Government stability and improve service delivery and accountability.

¶4. (SBU) DFID and UNAMI representatives said that their efforts to initiate civil service or public sector reform projects were brushed aside by the PM's Chief of Staff Adnan Ali because the GOI is currently "too busy" working on other issues. UNAMI efforts to insert mention of a Civil Service Commission into the draft Constitution were also unsuccessful. There is no clear candidate Ministry that would serve as a focal point for a public sector reform project though good candidates include the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Public Works, or the Ministry of Policy.

¶5. (SBU) The participants agreed to continue to consult closely and will devise an approach on how to proceed. Representatives of the World Bank, the European Union, and other donor organizations will be asked to participate in the next meeting as a workplan is developed.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: It is important that reform be initiated in the near future with significant GOI backing. This will require that the need for public sector reform be stressed to GOI senior officials while projects are developed and funded.

End comment.

Khalilzad